



Chosen



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Chapter 1 by Story Wars

There is a time in everyone's lives where destiny reaches out and says, OKAY BRO, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? It's a dividing road, on one side is doubt, the unknown. The other is same old life. These moments so rarely present themselves, and in a flickering moment they disappear. I can see these moments. I see them like stings of light and dust in the air, I watch as many pass them by in a whirl of everyday life. Some of these paths are death. But they don't flicker like some heartbeat and shine, instead it's more like smoke. Filtering out of some newly doused cigar. And sometimes, just sometimes, one of you sees something greater, something different, and it changes you.

It was December the 15th, when I caught sight of the grey smoke filtering from the earth. The last time I had seen one was two months ago, shrouding a man walking downtown, a briefcase clutched in his hand and a phone pressed to his ear. I'd learned not to interfere. You couldn't mess with fate. The repercussions of meddling always came at a steep price. I should know. So I watched, curious.

It spun and moved through the crowd of students waiting for buses to take them home for winter break. And then I saw it creep up and circle you, faster and faster until it looked like a shadowy haze around your body.

Death had chosen you.

Chapter 2 by JM



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Together, you and the girl and the dog were waiting at the crosswalk. Usually, there was a crossing guard working the street, making sure everyone made it across safely, but they were missing that day.

Traffic stopped. You looked left. You looked right. You encouraged the little girl to do the same. Then, you began to cross.

In the distance, I could hear the sound of a car squealing in your direction.

Chapter 3 by Lindsey Maurer



Time seemed to slow and meld around you. I knew better than to meddle, but what could I do? What to do? the words seemed to echo in my head, but I pushed them away. I felt a bond to you. I couldn't let you die. I jumped in front of the car, and felt it slam into my body.

And then I woke up.

Chapter 4 by Old Toady



You were sitting by my hospital cot in a chair too wooden to be comfortable. Regardless, you were clearly asleep and had been for a while, head lolling back on an improbable axis and mouth open with a half-released snore.

The grey smoke wasn't gone, but it wasn't smoke anymore. Ashes that had once swirled in the air had branded your skin, a tattoo you had never wanted or paid for. It writhed as though alive, and maybe it was. An angry predator robbed of a kill by a person who had made a split-second decision. No doubt it was hungry.

You woke yourself when your snore completed with a snort. Blearily, you glanced around. I doubted that your left eye was naturally a tornado of dust and flickering embers, but I didn't say anything. Both widened when they saw me staring. "You're awake."

I nodded, glancing around the room for something to write with, but you were already speaking again.

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"What's wrong with you?"

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I blinked, my hands freezing in the middle of uncapping a pen. It wasn't the greeting I had been expecting.

You backtracked immediately. "Sorry. That's not what I meant to say. It's just... your eyes."

I reached for your hand and you didn't stop me. *You see them?* I wrote. My handwriting was shakier than usual, but it was legible. You nodded.

"Like fire."

Never met someone else who can see them how they are. You looked in a mirror yet? You shook your head, so I motioned toward the bathroom. *Take a look.*

Your scream of shock brought the nurses in to check on me, but it wasn't me they should have been worried about.

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